

river rhapsody

poems from Windsor and Essex County, Ontario



Mark Nenadov

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Mark Nenadov is a poet from Essex, Ontario, Canada. Mark's poems have appeared in publications in the U.S., Canada, Pakistan, Australia, England, and Ireland. See <http://www.marknenadov.com> for more details.

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Poems Previously Appearing Elsewhere

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Thanks to *Northern Cardinal Review* for publishing a few of the three line poems, as well as *Ojibway Park Ovillejo* and *Chelydra serpentina*.

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Thanks to *Shot Glass Journal* for publishing *Wind In The Orchard*.

Thanks to *Three Line Poetry* for publishing one of the three line poems.

Introduction

Most of these poems were written during a particularly fruitful time span in my poetry writing life between mid-2012 and the summer of 2013. The writing of these poems, and the memories they capture, have been a great source of delight to me.

Personal creations that they are, I am under no illusion that they will be THAT delightful to you. However, I hope you will at last get some enjoyment out of reading this poetry!

As a writer, it's stunning to find that people actually enjoy your work, but it's also humbling to know that most of your writing simply stinks! I submit this book to you in hopes that you'll find more wheat than chaff herein.

I'd like to conclude this introduction by passing along a few notes of special thanks.

First of all, I thank my God, the Triune God revealed in the Bible, in whom I live, and move, and have my being. His Word is full of poetry and has also taught me to love words. Second, I thank my dear, wonderful wife who inspires me and whose love, kindness, and support cannot be matched.

I also thank my two daughters. My first daughter is delightfully funny, full of energy, and sweet. I've written more poems since she's been born than I ever have previously. My second daughter is making her appearance soon, and I'm looking forward to meeting her!

I must extend my thanks, also, to the many family and friends who, in their own ways, have guided, helped, encouraged, and blessed me.

Casualties

How many dead
lie scattered on the pavement
in front of the town monument
to the two great wars?

As many as swarmed our cars and windows and doors.
Expected casualties, but far too many.

They came into the world
in a dramatic race:
and made an early exit.

Their bodies,
which seem to fill every empty space
aren't fleshy enough to crunch as I walk over them
and ponder how short life is.

Their antennae and mandibles
sit still
monuments to a short strife-free existence,
they only had one chance to make an impression.
and theirs is imprinted
on the sidewalks and roads and driveways.

Waugh Was In Windsor

The only trotting
of this globe
that I ever seem to do
is within the grasp
of the covers
of *When The Going Was Good*.

I turn the page
plotting to finish before noon
as I sit
before the riverside
sitting on a cold bench
in September.

I wonder what it would be like
to travel Africa
without a plane
and confide with Evelyn Waugh
that witty chap.

There's a lot of
waiting
with a Waugh slant, perhaps
as I eye
the local
yokels
and the fellow travelers
critically.

Are they mulling about
in Africa
or Windsor?
My face is so buried
in the book
that it's hard to know
as the bold English man on the cover
leers at everyone
with his pipe at hand.

Waugh visited Windsor one day
and now his books
are here to stay.

Concrete Shore

I'll ramble down along the riverside
flying before Detroit's
dilated horizon
like a sleepless seagull.

Passing strange sculptures
eyed by a family of mallard ducks,
gliding as though I were a pigeon
finding a weary bearded man
who is busy not catching fish.

I'll appear for our picnic
with our lunch in hand
in the grass by the silent train
you and I will sit there gingerly
as the river returns with its goods
licking the bare concrete shore.

The End Of The Road

Flat tire
short luck
no mechanic
really stuck.

You can tell this place
used to be a swarthy pit
slogging many down to their demise
the sun bears down on you
you squint your eyes
as your brow feels like melted glue
and the humidity squeezes you
like angry hands
surrounding your neck.

This flat stage
for the wiles of the coyote
which beguiles you
as you trek northward
for miles and miles and see nothing
but austere corn ready for gleaning
and rows of aloof soybeans
as your car
makes its escape.

Detroit-tinged Sky

Windsor, Ontario is a city of roses
with delicious Arabic eats
along shady streets
filled with dodgy old men
quoting William Butler Yeats
while sweating autoworkers
earn their motor burgers
and pigeons fly
under a Detroit-tinged sky.

Buildings That Scream

Along the topography
proven to be flat
how far away from Windsor can you flee
and still see the buildings that scream
the 'Star Spangled Banner'?

As I make my escape
my thoughts return to downtown
and the ubiquitous weathered guy
with the feathered hat and wide smiles
and wonder whether he's the only tour guide
along this city's miles?

I depart in my Big Three car
and see the strip of motels
as I furiously chew on the lip of a Tim Horton's cup
there was a grouch in line at the drive-thru
but as morning rolls away his face fades into
the beautiful morning crouch of a Malden Park heron.

Five Three-Liners

401 drive
many kilometers
of kilometers

—

you learn that toad stool
wrinkles forest noses
more than toadstools

—

summer stalks climb
tomatoes missing
dour skull chews

—

toad builds a mansion
barricaded for cold
against monsters ten-toed

—

my heart shivers and my spine recoils
disgust's mist floats into the cage
the possum's fierce eyes stare through me

River Rhapsody

A frigid spring wind
whips wafts of coolness
down the river's
speckled neck.
The sun can't quite
warm up the chill
that runs down my back,
so I tip toe down the path
to the edge of the river.

Fingering the buildings
on the Detroit sky-line
with my eyes,
my thoughts trickle back
to the time when Friar Louis Hennepin
saw this shore for the first time.
He must have been impressed.
Virgin land, native land.

Black bears roamed here free
in the swarthy, swampy land,
until they were verging
on brink of extinction.
Now only dive-bombing
Swallows and Wolf Spiders,
Bee hives,
proud Red-Winged Blackbirds,
sweaty joggers,
shawarma places,

and loud car speakers
guard this shore.

So I sit on a rocky section
by the glistening water
and notice a wolf spider
dancing among the rocks
hiding every few moments.
And yet he is strangely defiant
just as though
a world superpower
isn't looming over us
right across the river

I only have a few minutes
to spend here until
I need to return to work,
so I watch the boats go by
parallel to the shore
of two proud countries,
and I can see right across the river.
I wave to some lonely car
navigating downtown Detroit
alone, alone, alone
in some sort of post-urban haze
settling over the Motor City.

Five More Three-Liners

light vibrates west-ward
the day after July 3rd
mourning doves scatter

—

Was it the stroke of 100 or so marching years
two explosions and a doomed race
with the city that painted this town?

—

fiery fox
exchanges beams
then fox snake flees

—

beautiful poems
can be written in feasting
but famine poems move

—

I paid twenty dollars for a maple and fifteen for a birch tree
But some lurch axed them down
And now the mushrooms come for free.

Ojibway Limerick

An owl in a wooden home
inspires the muse to write a poem.
I've come to meet my dear
my, oh my, a deer seems near
which has chosen Ojibway Park to roam!

Ojibway Park Ovillejo

A totem pole guards a parking lot
Tranquil spot.
The wondrous world of wildlife converges
Surges with lupine.
A wily fox snake sneaks
Where night eyes peek.
The Eastern Towhee twists its beak
A turtle submerges before long
A Northern Cardinal tweets its song
Tranquil spot surges with lupine, where night eyes peek.

A Day At Ojibway Park

I park my car in the parking lot
which sits in the clearing in the woods
pockets of primal, candid, Canadian “jungle”
with greens gaping like chlorophyll-chugging vacuum cleaners.

Trees, tall ones, trying to touch the clouds
voles vying for scarce resources
while the coy coyotes cackle
rolling in wild lupine.

Echoes of first nations
in wild, winnowing wisdom wails
as the white-tailed deer breed like bunnies
burping from a engorged life of plenteous pastures
filled with dinner plants and not much in the way of
predators to purge them from their misty millennial reign.

The sun filters through the trees
Sand, ferns, poison ivy, wild sumac, oak
and a rabbit appears and lifts its white-as snow tail
and some bird wails from a stump with crater in which you could get lost
and leaves which were arranged in autumn,
have now been tread in the wine press
of rain and snow, of bikes, of casual visitors,
of tourists chasing tanagers and swallows and owls.

As squirrels skirmish overhead and chipmunks chatter
creating a short burst of chaos in the thicket
another world is rushing by,

the cars providing the constant hum in the distance
and just to prove you haven't yet escaped from the rush, you hear
the exhaust of the rumbling automotive revolution
and rubber thumping the hard pavement.

Dragonfly

Dead dragonfly
catches my eye
sitting on the sidewalk
a shell of what
she used to be.

Who downed this
Apache of the pond
unmanned drone and
master of aerial war
making gnats flee
with wings splayed
in some mysterious
artful symmetry?

I pick it up
maybe I'll take it home
and put it in some
rubbing alcohol
and preserve its
green body
for bug eyed
posterity.

Then I see the ants
working undercover
parading the perimeter
of this beauty
emptying it

of its beastly bounty
and so I put it down
on the empty sidewalk
for another dragonfly hunter
to discover.

And I squint into the
morning sun
and push the stroller on
and kick the idea of
my specimen collection
down the road
as an inferior copy
of the dead creature
traverses the sky
still alive.

Serpent At Sadler's Pond

Snake shakes in the grass
appearing at Sadler's pond.
Twisting mass.
Hunting frogs
in the grass
and inside logs.

A ribbon-ish creature.
Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis,
to be precise.
Basking in the sun
along the rocks.
It would run
if it had legs.
Would that even be
any better
than roaming free
with legs?

From The Dock

The alluring lamp unveils
an approaching spring,
and cascades its light on the ripples of the pond
readily strummed by the wand of the cool air.
The breath of new life flees from the winter fast
but falls flat in apprehending spring. Not yet.

Oh, where do the gusts of post winter wind come from?
Who tells the creatures to march down in time for spring?
Ah, the brown branches, they wind and twist
like Medusa's hair.
The windmill steadily strokes incisions
in the blue veins of the sky
bursting above the geese which float and unwind.

What can match this very day?
And so, I wonder: Did Mr. Sadler anticipate that a very practical decision
to build this pond for his own purposes would bring
so much new life to a stained and weary town?

The rattling in the wind that the foliage plays,
sounds a bit like jazz. I stand on the deck and take in everything in
enjoying soft notes which pour from the thicket
as a bird salutes the vine with a ballad. Soon, it seems to say.

The geese seem to ignore me, drifting freely along
oblivious of the new fire station,
or the old one recently knocked down.
Just drifting. Drifting. Where? Somewhere.

August Commute

The gilded sword
of the life giving sun
pierces the shade
for everyone as we
run off to work
and some to play
this particularly august
August day.

Wind In The Orchard

Leaves sway
right to left
on these brisk days
in this book
of Chekhov plays.

At The Fabric Store

I don't normally hang out here with the swirling organzas
and the twirling taffetas and the ponte de roma
flying free at the fabric store
but the Sierra Suede
and the Chinese Brocade
erase my regrets
as I tag along with my love
far from home
biding my time in a place I don't belong
and yet secretly drawn
into the vortex of those
satin-saturated
light splashed
pieces of wonder.

Essex, Ontario

How do you define your town
when a town
is the air you breathe,
a message signed
in the the foliage
growing jaggedly
in the cracks of life?

Small Towns are
like a little grocery store,
set to the background
of an abandoned grain silo,
waiting for a future
and building one, too,
a jubilee built up
on top of the foundation
of unused railroad tracks.

Small towns can be unkempt
with the exception of
of their carefully manicured
municipal grounds
which get groomed religiously
(before school bells ring).
They display monuments
for a war which took
the town's daring
great-great grandfathers.
Far too soon.

Shop fronts
advertise services
which no longer exist
for a shrunk market,
though so many cars
motor by these
empty buildings on main street
and the creatures
which occupy them endlessly
ensure they will never
ever be totally abandoned

In a small town
many sorts of things
become abandoned
but with you
I'm found.

A Mole Waiting

Snow seized by the sun
shimmers as it drops down
crafting a tent for a mole
in mounds of tunnels underground
for shelter from the onslaught
of stormy snow. Waiting for spring.

Four In The Morning

The painted morning light
pierces my sleepless
body as I stumble
and my soul is awake
but I throw on the breaks as
my eyes start to close.

I only got a few hours
of restless sleep
I'm keeping warm
but it's dark
the glum moon taunts me
the street lights gently hum
mocking the wet, dark
pavement which pushes up
against my feet
on the way to the store.

Fresh Coat

Bury that spackle
moving like a mole
into the sordid depths
of an unwanted hole.

To cover that sticky spackle
the roller runs with the flow
and a squeaky cackle.
Only a bit to go.

So I'm sitting here and picking
at my ghastly fingers.
The paint keeps sticking
and the wall stares back.

Hawk

They call it a bird's eye view
I call it soaring
high in the sky
with my binoculars
razor eyes scoping out
hot, tasty treats
some flitting with wings
others scurrying amongst the grasses
finding tiny morsels of grain.

Anyhow, on this branch I rest.
You stroll by in your scooter
you may scoff now
but my eye pierces you.
I'm holding back.

Howard Avenue

“That's America”, the driver spits
reverberations of his chewing
bouncing off the horizon
as he points over to the rear-view
“We're on Howard, headed south”.

Eventually break lights appear.
The tracks are clear
and you wait for a train,
fearing someone, somewhere
might be on the tracks
unable to leave in time.

The train seems to take its time
and The Band is on your brain
as you stand in line
and Devonshire Mall stands
and waves its hands
in a pretty patient salute
along this forsaken route.

It's almost noon
and Windsor stands proudly
to a background tune
dancing along Detroit's skyline.

How Tulips Went Extinct

On a white birch tree
Sits a robin, proud.
A white meteor
bombards the tulips.

Point Pelee

A child is bumbling along the boardwalk
soaking in the summer sun,
scampering along comes
a slender five-lined skink
also soaking up the sun
which springs off the water,
that is lined with verdant plant life
and sly, sneaking creatures of the marsh
like leopard frogs
which rest on lily pads
placed by providence
with a wonderful symmetry
like gems set perfectly on display
eye candy for the walkers
like this child who
traverses the boardwalk
which anchors the sprawling marsh
where canoes swiftly slice
through the weed stew.

Lakeshore

I couldn't find a lake
in the town of Lakeshore
just a bunch of lonely roads,
with paths to farm houses
and a swiftly setting sun.

The sun was busy
blanketing the gloom
of snowy corn fields
edged by dancing, brown, barren
trees weighed down with a bounty
guarded by perching red-tailed hawks.

The hawks watched a stray cat play
in the ditch
into which
my pickup truck drove.

The Advent of Spring

A turtle slides stealthily into the pond
spring wields a magic wand:
to melt away the snow
and bring about the flower's flaming glow.
And one by one the colors show,
and a muskrat steadily swims--
a duck's beak skims.
A magic wand. Flower's flaring glow. Colors show.

Shopping In December

The haughty wind of winter
curses my Christmas Eve ears.
Getting my cart,
I see a frostbitten man
with a moustache
bigger than my heart.

The Snail

A snail crawls on the dew dusted pavement
leaving a loving trail of slime
trying to find a place in this sweltering world.
The snail receives signals from a handler--
secret operative,
heading for the target
at a snail's pace
and wondering,
how it will save face with the following time-sheet entry:
'Lunch on rotten carrot: 3 hours'?

Chelydra serpentina

My eyes caught an armoured vehicle
treading torpidly toward the pond
and as I stopped
it had a still expression
saying I ought to move on.

--The End--